

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A procurement system for purchasing a special item between a buyer of the special item and at least one supplier capable of supplying the special item, said system comprising:

a fulfillment system for communicating between said buyer and said supplier;

a database associated with said fulfillment system, said special item not being located within said database;

a special requisition for describing said special item; and

updated information, wherein said updated information is obtained in part from said special requisition and added to said database for future reference.

2. (Previous presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 1, wherein said database of said fulfillment system comprises a knowledge base comprising a plurality of predetermined relationships and a plurality of predetermined rules and a catalog database, said catalog database comprising catalog item information normalized with respect to said predetermined relationships in accordance with said predetermined rules.

3. (Original) A procurement system as recited in claim 2, wherein said special requisition is partially normalized according to said predetermined rules, with said buyer suggesting enhancements to said predetermined relationships for creating a potential unique description of the special item.

4. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 3, wherein said special requisition is reviewed by said at least one supplier and includes a proposed modification to at least one of said predetermined relationships.

5. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 4, further comprising a new predetermined rule to uniquely identify the special item, said new predetermined rule based at least in part on said updated information contained within said special requisition.

6. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited by claim 4, wherein said predetermined relationships comprise class and attribute characteristics and said at least one supplier is a plurality of ~~said~~ suppliers, said suppliers reviewing said special requisition and said fulfillment system normalizing said updated data received from each of said suppliers for comparison by said buyer, said buyer comparing said updated information based on identical class and attribute characteristics so as to provide a consistent basis for comparison between each special item available for purchase.

7. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 2, wherein said at least one supplier is identified with specific predetermined relationships, said fulfillment system comparing said special requisition prepared in accordance with said predetermined rules to select said at least one supplier to receive and review said special requisition.

8. (Original) A procurement system as recited in claim 2, wherein said update information related to the special item is normalized according to said predetermined rules and stored within said catalog database to uniquely identify the special item.

9. (Currently amended) A procurement system as recited in claim 12, wherein said predetermined relationships include class, attribute and value characteristics.

10. (Previously presented) A procurement system for purchasing a desired item, comprising:
a normalized catalog database comprising at least one unique catalog item, wherein each unique catalog item stored within said catalog database is identified with respect to class, attribute, and value relationships;

a knowledge base, said knowledge base comprising a set of predetermined rules used to convert free form catalog item information into said normalized catalog database in accordance with said relationships;

an item selection procedure, said procedure relying on said relationships to locate the desired item within said catalog database; and

an item specifying procedure, said procedure being invoked when the desired item cannot be located by said item selection procedure within said catalog database.

11. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 10, wherein said item specifying procedure comprises a structured requisition subsystem, said subsystem comprising:

a structured requisition, creation of said requisition being based on said relationships and at least one new class, attribute or value added to said relationships to uniquely identify the desired item that cannot be located within said catalog database.

12. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 11, wherein said relationships used to create said structured requisition further comprise identification of at least one supplier, said structured requisition being automatically sent to said identified at least one supplier by said system.

13. (Original) A procurement system as recited by claim 11, wherein said structured requisition is used to develop at least one new predetermined rule for uniquely identifying the desired item that cannot be located with said catalog database.

14. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 13, wherein said at least one new predetermined rule is added to said knowledge base to provide an update to said relationships.

15. (Original) A procurement system as recited in claim 14, wherein identifying information concerning the desired item is stored in said database in accordance with said relationships.

16. (Original) A procurement system as recited in claim 15, wherein the desired item becomes a catalog item available through said selection procedure after undergoing said specifying procedure.

17. (Original) A method for continuously updating a procurement system comprising the steps of:

establishing a normalized database of catalog items based on predetermined relationships;
determining rules to convert to convert free form information associated with said catalog items into said normalized database;

processing a request for a special item not located within said catalog database using said predetermined relationships; and

specifying an additional relationship to uniquely identify the special item.

18. (Original) A method as recited in claim 17, wherein said predetermined relationships include class, attribute and value characteristics and said additional relationship is at least one of class, attribute, or value.

19. (Original) A method as recited in claim 18, further comprising the steps of:
updating said rules to incorporate said new class, attribute or value from said specifying step;
and
adding the special item to said database using said updating of said rules.

20. (Previously presented) A procurement method for ordering a special item comprising the steps of:
searching for an item within a database;
determining that said item is not within said database;
when it is determined that said item is not within said database performing the steps of -
(a) creating a structured requisition for said item,
(b) transmitting said structured requisition to at least one potential supplier,
(c) locating a desired supplier for said item, and
(d) adding said item to said database.

21. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 20, further comprising the step of normalizing said database such that said item is categorized in accordance with class, attribute and value relationships.

22. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 20, wherein said creating step includes ~~the~~ a step of identifying normalized relationship for said item.
23. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 22, wherein said transmitting step includes the step of automatically identifying said potential supplier using said normalized relationships.
24. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 22, wherein said locating step includes the step of updating said normalized relationships to create a new relationship that uniquely identifies said item.
25. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 22, wherein said adding step comprises using said new relationship.
26. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 24, further comprising the steps of:
- including a knowledge base and free form item data;
 - adding a new relationship to said knowledge base;
 - processing said free form data through said knowledge base; and
 - updating said database.
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